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PERSEVERE DURING ADVERSITY

Some Christians respond successfully to adversity by “successfully.” I mean that despite the adversity in their lives, their faith is strengthened, their walk with God grows, and they continue to draw close to Him and receive His blessings and provision for their lives.

Unfortunately, not every Christian responds well to adversity. Some people are defeated rather than victorious as they face life’s many problems. Instead of praising God and walking in faith and perseverance, they develop a “woe is me” attitude. Adversity has no beneficial effect because of their response.

There are certain principles we can apply that will help us respond to adversity successfully.

EXPECT ADVERSITY

The key to overcoming adversity is to realize it is the norm in the Christian life. This does not mean that believers should seek out adversity or trouble. This does not mean we should consider every problem an attack from Satan. It just means we should realize that, like all people, God’s blessed and loved people will face adversity.

Because this is true, none of us should be surprised by adversity; rather, we should expect it. Jesus Himself said, “In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The apostle Paul said, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). The apostle Peter said, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).

Near the end of his letter, Peter said, “Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2). No matter how spiritual or faithful, every believer will face troubles and trials. We should expect adversity; recognizing it will help us overcome adversity successfully.

GOOD CAN COME FROM ADVERSITY

We will be able to face and respond to troubles and trials with confidence if we recognize the good that God can bring out of them. You may say to yourself, “I can see that God can bless despite adversity, but does anything good really come out of it?” The answer is “Yes!”

Our troubles can actually become blessings. How? First, they can draw us closer to God. Adversity can bring us into a deeper relationship with our heavenly Father, the One who loves us beyond measure. The second possible good result of adversity is that others may see the wonderful way in which the Lord is working through our adversity. The problems in our lives often provide an opportunity for others to see and glorify God.

Perhaps you are experiencing setbacks, opposition, failures, heartbreak, or loss. Do not give up. Remember these four principles, and keep your faith in God’s strength so that you can overcome adversity successfully.

Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary
How to Define “Spirituality”? 
Spirituality is difficult to define and is often misinterpreted to mean introversion and mysticism. The word derived in the person of the Holy Spirit; therefore, it should be understood in relation to Him. The importance of the Holy Spirit is emphasized by the apostle Paul when he declares that the children of God and those who are “led by the Spirit” (Rom. 8:14). The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and leads us to truth. A spiritual person is not mystical; rather, he or she is someone who displays the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5).

What Should a Church Do to Be Attractive? 
Churches that grow are churches that attract—own members and the community around them. An attractive church is magnetic. A magnet has the ability to attract a metal object. That object in turn is magnetized and attracts another. A magnetic church has magnetic members who attract others to church. In biblical terms, believers do not go to church; they become a church. What attracts them is the friendship they find in the fellowship of believers. A magnetic church also has magnetic preaching. This kind of preaching is relevant because it focuses on the basic needs of the listeners. It is presented in a style that reaches the heart and the mind. A magnetic church has magnetic programs and is a place where adults and children may learn about Jesus from dedicated, competent teachers.

How Do You Define “Spirituality”? 
Spirituality is linked to Christian practices such as reading the Bible, visiting, private devotions, family worship, and prayer. By promoting these practices, church leaders may encourage the spiritual development of their members. Prayer in particular is very important for the development of spirituality and the acceptance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus declared that God will “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask” (Luke 11:13).

How Can Leaders Develop Their Members’ Spirituality? 
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One of the main differences between preaching and teaching is that preaching usually tends to be a monologue, while true teaching promotes participation. In general, preaching has the objective of intentionally transforming the believers’ morals, while teaching concentrates more on the intellectual transformation of the listener.

SHOULD THE CHURCH TEACH MORE THAN PREACH? 
Yes, especially because Jesus’ charge involves two key tasks: to make disciples and to teach (Matt. 28:19, 20). Although these two functions do not exclude preaching, their purpose is intrinsically instructive. As one can observe in the Scriptures, it is evident that Jesus’ communication with His disciples had a more pedagogical character (teaching) than homiletic communication (preaching). Jesus is more popular as a Rabbi and Master than as a preacher. Ellen G. White emphasizes the importance of teaching for spiritual growth, indicating the value of limiting preaching in order to dedicate more time to the preparation of members to share the gospel.

Classifying Jesus’ sermons within the homiletical taxonomies of our day would be a job corresponding to a doctoral thesis. However, two types of sermons are clearly identified in Jesus’ preaching: thematic sermons (the Sermon on the Mount, for instance) and narrative sermons (parables and other metaphors).

What Kind of Sermons Did Jesus Preach? 
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Why Did Jesus’ Parables Receive So Much Attention? 
Jesus’ parables were usually based on events and stories in the listeners’ everyday lives. Each time the listeners observed something similar, they remembered Jesus’ teachings.

What do You Consider the Most Important Factor in Teaching Adults Effectively? 
When teaching adults, it is vital to remember that they bring a wealth of experience to the class, seminar, or Bible study. They are used to being valued, listened to, and treated as equals. The teacher’s approach must be one that encourages participation and values what each student has to offer. Everyone benefits when the class is viewed as a collaborative effort involving the entire group. The goal is to involve all in searching the Scriptures and preparing to share the gospel.

This interview first appeared in the Portuguese edition of Elder’s Digest.
The river of healing started to flow out from the church in Sandtown. From the ‘spring’ within their small faith community, a river of healing started to flow out into their neighborhood.

The church focused on 15 of Sandtown’s 72 blocks. Street by street, they rebuilt the ruins, leaving a trail of lovely, affordable, restored homes and happy new homeowners. The new owners of these homes worked with the volunteers (providing “sweet equity”) and were given the keys to their new homes in a community-wide ceremony when each home was completed.

The river of healing continued to flow out into the community around this congregation, growing deeper and deeper. They raised money and built a new $5 million school for the children of the revived community. The healing river deepened as they started a health center, a job development program, and a drug rehab center. The Sandtown Children’s Choir is nationally famous, traveling far and near to share their experience of hope revived in a community that flourishes once again.

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundation; you will be called Repairer of Bro- ken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings” (Isa. 58:12). God continues to use the New Song Community Church (also known as New Song Worship and Arts Center), a church from which a river of healing flowed and transformed a dying community. Wherever the rivers flow, every- thing lives (Ezek. 47:9).1

IS YOUR CHURCH A RIVER CHURCH?

Does a river of healing flow from your church? Is this river growing deeper or shallower? Is your church healthy within, having “a spring whose waters never fail” (Isa. 58:11) so a healing river can flow outward?

Earnestly ask God to continually guide your church as you seek to discover and meet the needs in your community. By His grace, make your community a better place because your church is in it.

Go and flow! Be a source of a great healing flood to transform your community for Jesus’ sake!

May-Ellen Colon is Assistant Director of the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

2 All emphasis supplied.
3 ibid.
4 See To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City, by Mark Gornik, for the rest of the story.
5 For more information on doing a community-based transformational ministry with your church, see Keys to Community Services, available from www.adventsource.org. Click Adult/Adventist Community Services/Store.

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When choosing His leaders, Jesus used the same principle that God used when choosing a king for ancient Israel. In Samuel 16:7, we read that “the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, ... For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” In her book The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White explains that Jesus completely ignored the secular notions always outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

In her book The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White explains that Jesus completely ignored the secular notions always observed when choosing people for offices or representative functions. Most of the disciples were common people with no formal education and no apparent talent for leadership. But Jesus called them, instructed them, and enabled them with power (pages 295-297).

After Pentecost, the disciples assumed leadership of the church as an extension of Jesus’ ministry. From this perspective, they also became God’s agents in the calling process (Matt. 18:18), whose only objective was to proclaim the virtues of He who “called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

While biblical evidences are clear that prophets were called in the Old Testament and apostles and missionaries were called in the New Testament, Paul says that “if a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). This statement suggests that each person is free to make his or her decision as to whether to be a church elder, apart from God’s call. The Bible gives no indication that the desire to assume the office of elder automatically qualifies one for such office. In 1 Timothy 3:1, we read that to desire such office is an “excellent” thing. The immediate context of this verse only presents restrictions for possible candidates for eldership instead of encouraging the ambition for such office.

The concepts given in Deuteronomy 18:20; Jeremiah 23:30; Isaiah 6:1, and Jeremiah 1:4-10 reinforce the position that God calls His people who elects them as officers (Acts 13:2). The Bible says, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for their sacred posts” (Acts 13:2). This is a biblical quote that involves the call that calls, the people who are called, and the church that confirms the call. Although the primary origin of the call is restricted to God, the rendering of the call depends on the individuals called as much as on the church, which recognizes the gifts of the elders for leadership and elects them as officers” (Elder’s Guide, 24). Usually, two aspects of the call are considered: the inner call, which is the call for the individual in particular; and the exterior call, which is the confirmation of God’s call to a person, through the local assembly of believers.

There are some questions you may ask to ascertain whether you are indeed qualified for the office of elder:

- Do others recognize my gifts and abilities in this area?
- Have other people requested me to serve in activities of leadership?
- Have others encouraged me to preach and teach?
- Has someone suggested my name to be church elder?
- Do I feel God is leading me in that direction? Serving as church elder is a significant responsibility. It requires a call from God and a deep spiritual commitment. In choosing those to serve as elders, church leaders should study the biblical principles and examples with much prayer so that God may be honored by those who serve.

Paulo Pinheiro is editor of the Portuguese edition of Elder’s Digest.
According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, “Under the pastor and in the absence of a pastor, the local elder is the spiritual leader of the church and is responsible for fostering all departments and activities of the work. The elder should maintain a mutually helpful relationship with all other church officers” (p. 51).

In fostering the various lines of church activity, it is important to remember what the ultimate objective of each of these activities is, lest it be little more than keeping the wheels of the church machinery going.

**THE SUPREME BUSINESS OF EVERY CHURCH**

The supreme business of every church and every Christian is the saving of souls. The apostle Paul declares, “And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:11, 12). Weymouth’s translation reads, “In order to fully to equip His people for the work of serving.” Moffatt renders it, “For the equipment of the saints, for the business of the ministry.”

This makes it clear that persons who are won to the church should at once become active in working for others. They are saved to serve. Ellen G. White declares, “Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members at work” (Evangelion, 353, 354). She continues, “Person responsibility, personal activity in seeking the salvation of others, must be the education given to all newly come to the faith” (p. 354).

The apostolic church of first organized as a missionary agency for carrying out the Savior’s commission. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was likewise first organized for the work of evangelism. It was born in the evangelistic mold, and when it ceases to be evangelistic in its concepts and mission, it might as well cease to exist. “The church of Christ on earth was organized for missionary purposes” (Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 6, p. 29). This concept alone will keep the church alive as a Spirit-filled movement. The church may survive without it, but it will change in character and function, is one of the great challenges confronting pastors and church leaders today. As a local elder, let this be your great burden, the subject of earnest prayer and personal endeavor. The accomplishment of this grand objective may depend largely upon your personal influence and labors.

**Love of Lost Souls**

Unfortunately, there are some churches that have lost their missionary zeal and are happy to have it so. A pastor of such a church remarked, “My members want to hear a good, comforting sermon on Sabbath and then be left alone the rest of the week.” And in a large city where there were a number of churches, one pastor said of his congregation, “They are not interested in adding new members. The church is just the size they like. They don’t want it to get larger.”

During the summer of 1968, some members of a congregation in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, generated a movement to remove their pastor. The pastor was young Peter Marshall, son of the late pastor of the large New York Avenue Presbyterian church in Washington, D.C. and chaplain of the U.S. Senate. After the young pastor had been in Cape Cod only a few months, a number of people wished him to be removed. Why? Apparently he was too successful. As one member put it, “This is a little church, and we want to keep it that way.”

While a few people see growth in this light, the great majority of our members welcome it. But how many members are really doing something to produce growth?

Pastors, elders, and other church officers have a solemn responsibility in this area. We are counseled: “The elders and those who have leading places in the church should give more thought to their plans for conducting the work. They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish what they can according to their several ability. . . . It is very essential that such an education should be given to the members of the church that they will become unselfish, devoted, efficient workers for God; and it is only through such a course that the church can be prevented from becoming fruitless and dead” (Christian Service, 62).

That too many of our churches may even now be “fruitless and dead” is a concern. How can they be kept alive?

“Let [the minister] seek to keep the church alive by teaching its members how to labor with him for the conversion of sinners. This is generalship, and the result will be found far better than if he should seek to perform the work alone” (Evangelion, 357).

If the church is to fulfill its mission, it is vital that the total membership assume personal responsibility for reaching those who have not yet heard the message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord. The negative attitude many members have toward personal soul-winning places a limit upon evangelistic possibilities in the congregation. Where such attitudes persist, they must be changed. This calls for positive spiritual leadership.

In his excellent book Evangelism That Evanges, Dr. Carl M. Zovko puts it this way: “We must see that evangelism or reaching the lost for Christ and the church is the primary program of the whole church. Today in many churches this program is playing second fiddle to other programs within the church, many of which are totally unrelated and irrelevant to the command of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature. We need to restudy and reevaluate each committee and organization of the church in the light of the Great Commission. Is the winning of lost souls to Christ still pertinent, still par amount? Have we who determine the total program of the church any very profound conviction that the su premise of the whole church is to reach the last person, old and young, for Christ? If so, then it is our responsibility to see that every orga nization participates in the attainment of the object. Not a single group, of whatever size, age, or importance, should be overlooked or bypassed in this matter. Only when this program has been successfully promoted in each organization within the church, may that church be properly said to be evangelistic” (24).

Producing an evangelistic consciousness throughout the church, within every department and function, is one of the great est challenges confronting pastors and church leaders today. As a local elder, let this be your great burden, the subject of earnest prayer and personal endeavor. The accomplishment of this grand objective may depend largely upon your personal influence and labors. Pray this prayer with me: “Dear Lord, Thou hast awakened me to a new sense of responsibility. I have failed, and we as a church have failed in doing what is expected of us in reaching those about us for Christ. But Lord, forgive and grant that new life and zeal may come into our labors. Give me a new burden for souls and wisdom to know how I can best be used of Thee to help arouse our total membership to greater evangelistic endeavor. Amen.”


Orley M. Berg was Associate Minister Secretary of the General Conference when he wrote this article.
Get connected. Share your story. Make disciples.

Does it sound familiar? Although society shifts and changes through each generation and from culture to culture, the basic principles of biblical evangelism haven’t changed since Jesus lived on earth.

While some Christians invest immeasurable time and energy in creating new ways to evangelize, we often need to return to those concepts Jesus gave long ago—get connected with people, share what God has done for you, and make disciples. It’s what He did while He was here. There are many missionaries working cross-culturally around the globe, tirelessly attempting to contextualize the gospel message into local vocabulary and culture. But in more developed countries it’s often easy to forget just how many unchurched are in our own communities. According to a recent study by George Barna, the United States now boasts 100 million unchurched. That’s one in three of the adult population. In the United Kingdom, only about 13% regularly attend church.1 In Australia the figure is even more staggering: 92.5% are unchurched.2

DISCIPLING POSTMODERNs: IT’S ALL ABOUT GETTING CONNECTED

Our current evangelism strategy can benefit from a renewed focus on the unchurched western population. Just as we create tailored mission resources for other vast unreached people groups, such as Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims, we need resources to reach the unchurched in our own backyard. In the past the Adventist Church has mainly focused on providing Bible study courses for individuals who have an established relationship with Christ and are ready to study Scripture for doctrinal orthodoxy. But there is a need for resources to pique the interest of the unchurched, those who are not overtly classified under a regular “mission field.”

When a new believer is baptized into membership there is a need for nurture, support, accountability, and equipment for service as they begin a lifetime of growth into Christian maturity. Where can pastors obtain authentic resources for contextualized evangelism and discipleship within the unchurched postmodern context? The Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies (CSPS) at the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission is working to provide discipleship pathways and other evangelistic supplements. CSPS is directed by Dr. Miroslav Pujic, who worked in ministry to postmoderns for more than five years and developed the LIFE development discipleship pathway.

CSPS researches postmodern culture and works to create resources based on Christ’s biblical methods of outreach. Consequently, the materials offered through CSPS focus on the full spectrum of evangelism, not just the Bible study segment. Instead, they start with creating video clips and sharing magazines, encouraging daily mingling with neighbors and friends, and Internet outreach-building social capital in the local community. Using discipleship principles, pastors and lay members are encouraged to begin small groups and Bible studies and then to continue actively training and equipping new believers.

In addition to research of postmodern culture and the development of fresh and relevant resources, CSPS provides regular international refresh events, weekends of training for pastors and lay members on how to understand and connect with the unchurched in their communities. These weekends, presented by the CSPS director Dr. Miroslav Pujic, facilitate a deeper comprehension of the underlying patterns of contemporary culture through dynamic and engaging activities.

“This refresh weekend was the Rubicon in my ministry,” says Pastor Sam Chetty from Seattle, Washington. “I am hooked on this! It is absolutely relevant.”

“Postmoderns are a distinct people group, just like any other mission field,” says Pujic, “requiring the same purposeful research and contextualization as people groups in distant lands.”

One of the main evangelistic resources provided by CSPS is the LIFE (Leadership, Inspiration, Education, Development) discipleship pathway. LIFE development or LD focuses on reaching out through three aspects of evangelism: friendship, process, and nurture. It uses a multi-sensory approach including personal testimony, DVD, books, magazines, and interactive small groups.

The LD concepts of community, active involvement, and authentic relationships are also especially appealing to young Adventists. “I’ve tried to share Jesus with people of a postmodern mindset before, and it has been frustrating not knowing how to approach them,” said Carlos Cirillo, theology major at Southern Adventist University. “I can’t wait to learn more about how to apply LD principles in my own ministry as a young pastor.”

“When putting close attention, we may take cultural shifts for granted,” says Pujic, “and miss golden opportunities. Sometimes we need to adapt what we’ve learned about the past to meet the needs of the present without altering our foundation in biblical truth.”

LD is an evangelistic update for a specific culture group. It doesn’t throw out what’s tried and true but builds on what we already know while encouraging us to return to our biblical evangelistic roots. Built around the concepts of getting connected with people (friendships), walking together in a journey of sharing (process), and encouraging the postmoderns in their newfound belief (faith nurture), LD helps you understand how to relate to secular people in a biblical way.

The LD model was initially implemented in 2002 in the United Kingdom, and has since spread globally to include events in Denmark, Norway, Japan, Korea, Australia, Canada, Slovenia, Serbia, and the United States. LD materials are available to pastors and lay members throughout the world church through the CSPS office. CSPS also seeks to link practitioners and scholars together in a global network. You can browse links to churches and ministries on their website. Or search “Centre for Secular & Postmodern Studies” to find the CSPS group on Facebook.com and dialogue with others around the world. You can subscribe online for refresh (the CSPS newsletter), to read news, share ministry tips, and enjoy profiles of men and women active in relevant ministry.

While culture continues to change and shift around us, we have tremendous opportunities to get connected with the unreached. In His ministry on earth, Jesus befriended people, met their needs, and only after they had a relationship of trust did He urge them to follow Him. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the unreached western population,” says Pujic. “Postmoderns are a distinct people group, just like any other mission field.”

Has your evangelism outreach integrated this essential component? LIFE (Leadership, Inspiration, Education, Development) is training and equipping new believers.

The Office of Adventist Mission operates five Global Mission Study Centers in key locations around the world, including the Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies. Under the direction of Dr. Ganoune Diop, their purpose is to build bridges of understanding with people from different religions and philosophies. Drawing from years of research and experimentation, the Study Centers equip church members and leadership with more-effective means for sharing the everlasting gospel with people from different world views. To learn more about the Study Centers, www.AdventistMission.org.

2 European Social Survey
3 Wikipedia.com
4 Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing, page 143
5 Miroslav Pujic, “LD is an evangelistic update for a specific culture group,” page 4
6 The Centre for Secular & Postmodern Studies

Sarah K. Aasfei is assistant director of the Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies for the Office of Adventist Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters. The Office of Adventist Mission operates five Global Mission Study Centers in key locations around the world, including the Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies. Under the direction of Dr. Ganoune Diop, their purpose is to build bridges of understanding with people from different religions and philosophies. Drawing from years of research and experimentation, the Study Centers equip church members and leadership with more-effective means for sharing the everlasting gospel with people from different world views. To learn more about the Study Centers, www.AdventistMission.org.

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Adultery is a topic we like to discuss, but we must talk about it so as to find forgiveness for sin to prevent this sin in our lives and in the lives of those we love.

I. GOD IS OFFENDED BY ALL TYPES OF ADULTERY.

A. Physical but not emotional. There is no commitment, no responsibility, and no need for honesty. This is the easiest to justify in one’s own mind because the offender may still love his/her spouse. It is often excused as just meeting a physical need, like eating food or drinking water. One might classify David and Bathsheba’s relationship in this category.

B. Emotional but not physical. This happens when you give your emotions and your heart but would not consider having a physical relationship. Online relationships could fit into this category.

C. Physical and emotional. This is the most damaging for a marriage, but recovery is possible because Jesus Christ can bring healing. There can be forgiveness. There can be restoration. He who brought the dead back to life can surely give life to a dead marriage.

D. Spiritual (Hosea 4:12, 13). In Revelation 2:2, God accused the church at Ephesus of having left its first love. Is there anything in your life that you are more passionate about than your relationship with Jesus? Would you be satisfied with a husband or wife who was 90 percent faithful? Of course not. Yet we expect God to be happy with us when we are less than 100 percent faithful to Him.

II. GOD SEES THE CAUSES BEHIND ADULTERY.

A. Adultery comes from our minds (Matt. 5:27-28; 15:19). Like any other sin we might commit, the battle against adultery is fought in the mind. That’s why Paul considered it so important that we allow our minds to be transformed by God’s Word and God’s Spirit (Rom. 12:1, 2).

B. Adultery comes from our arrogance. “It won’t happen to me. I’m above that.” “Those laws don’t apply to me!” “I can do that and get away with it!” Do you flirt with other men or women? If so, you are playing with fire (Prov. 6:27, 28).

C. Adultery comes from our failure to recognize it as sin against God (Lev. 20:10; Ps. 51). God expects exclusivity in our marriage because He expects exclusivity in our relationship with Him. The marriage relationship is to be a reflection of our relationship with Him. That’s why God is so offended by broken marriages.

D. Adultery is not just a matter of one spouse sinning against the other. It is also a matter of sinning against Almighty God who is your Creator and who is your Judge (Hab. 13:4).

E. Adultery is an offense against God because it destroys trust. It breaks the vow that two people have made to one another. When that trust is betrayed, it is much harder for the person who experienced betrayal to trust in God and believe His promises.

F. Adultery occurs when we devalue our commitment (Ps. 15:4). Commitment is viewed negatively because it limits our ability to feel independent and free, to experience new things, to change our minds spontaneously. We focus on self-gratification rather than on loyalty to others.

G. Adultery comes from our emphasis on personal pleasure (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:19-23). Adultery comes from our failure to build a strong, loving relationship with the one we vowed to love and cherish.

H. Adultery comes from our failure to provide payment for your sin. Confess that Jesus’ death on the cross is sufficient to cover your sin and to other affected parties and seek forgiveness. Determine that you will make the necessary changes and that it will not happen again.

Or, for personalized assistance please call
+1 301 680-6508

General Conference
Ministerial Association
12901 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Elder’s Digest
SERMON 1

YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

Exodus 20:14

If you would like to conduct a Quit-Now program and you’re looking for presentation materials, participant forms and visual aids or you are an individual looking for self-help materials to guide you down the road toward freedom, you can find what you need at www.quit-now.info
IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

1. In Uncertain Times, Remember God’s Promises.

The first thing God did was to remind Jacob of the promises He had made (Genesis 28:14). In uncertain times, we are to remember God’s promises. The principle is true not just for Jacob but for all of us. When facing difficult uncertain times, we need to open our Bibles and let the Holy Spirit remind us of what God has promised.

Ellen G. White says: “Every promise in God’s Word is ours. . . . When as taunted, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the Word. All its strength is yours” (The Faith I Live By, 23).

2. In Uncertain Times, Remember God’s Presence.

If we are to face the future with confidence, we must remember that God is with us. Jacob needed to know this also. In verse 15 God said very clearly, “I am with you.” Jacob may have felt alone, but He was never alone and neither are we! God is always with us. Remembering His presence in uncertain times has been a source of encouragement for all the saints (Ps. 23; Matt. 28).

III. In Uncertain Times, Remember God’s Protection.

God next reminded Jacob of His protection. In verse 15 He said, “I am with you and will watch over [keep] you.” In other words, I’m going to protect you on this perilous journey. This did not mean that nothing hurtful or bad would ever happen to Jacob, but it did mean—just as it means to us—that God will protect us so that His plan, which is good, comes to fruition. Jacob did not have to worry about his brother’s anger, about bandits, or about wild animals. He trusted God that He would protect him.

In the same way, we do not need to fear the dangers we face in today’s world. Terrorism, disease, crime, financial loss, natural disasters—God has promised to watch over us, and certainly that is enough.

IV. In Uncertain Times, Remember God’s Provision.

The promise in verse 15 to “watch over you” had a dual meaning. The Hebrew word for “watch” meant to protect and “to provide for or to take care of.” The Hebrew word is first used in Genesis 2:15, when God instructed Adam to “take care” of the garden, i.e., provide for its needs. In the story of Jacob, God was promising to provide for his needs as well as to protect him from harm. Jacob clearly understood this because he expected God to watch over him on his journey and provide food and clothing for him, as we see in verse 20.

God has promised to provide for all the needs of His people. Jesus reminds us that the Father knows what we need, and just as He provides for the birds of the air, He will certainly provide for us.

Ellen G. White reminds us: “All who keep the commandments in truth and integrity reveal to the world that they are under the rule of God and are dependent upon Him for their temporal and spiritual victories. With God’s presence and favor, His people are safe, although they may suffer persecution for the truth’s sake. His goodness and the riches of His grace are their protection and salvation” (Sermons and Sketches, 2:329).

These are the bases of our certain in uncertain times: God’s promises, God’s presence, God’s protection, and God’s provision. Each of us will face uncertain times, but we can be encouraged because God is with us and for us.

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

We have rich promises in the Word of God, if we only believe and trust in Him. We are in danger of trusting to our own human efforts, and not putting our trust in God.

Ellen White
Our Father Cares, p. 239

YOU SHALL NOT LIE

One morning a minister ended his sermon by saying, “Next week I am going to preach on the subject of liars.” And in preparation, I would like you all to read the seventeenth chapter of Mark.

The last week, the preacher began his sermon by asking, “Now, all of you who have done as I requested and read the seventeenth chapter of Mark, please raise your hand.” Nearly every hand in the congregation went up. “Very good,” said the preacher. “You are precisely the people I wish to speak to this morning. There is no seventeenth chapter of Mark!” (Bible Illustrator).

God considers lying a very serious matter, regardless of whether the consequences are immediate and deadly (Proverbs 6:16-19).

I. Common Lies

See if you can find yourself in this list:

- The policeman asks you, “Do you know how fast you were going?” You reply, “Was I speeding?”
- Someone calls on the phone for you, and you step outside the door so that your spouse or child can say that you were not home at the moment.
- You’d rather not go to work on Monday, so you call in sick and go shopping.
- You convince yourself that if you buy a certain car, you will be wealthy and trusting Jesus.
- You promise to spend more time with your family, but never get around to it.
- The fish gets bigger every time you tell the story.
- On Sabbath morning, your wife asks how you like the new dress she just bought. You hate the dress, but you say, “It looks beautiful” so as not to hurt her feelings.

II. Why Is It Important to Tell the Truth?

- Telling the truth gives evidence of a change in your life (Col. 3:9, 10). Lies give evidence that you are still a liar. In John 14:7, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Truth.” When you accepted Jesus as your Savior, you received the Holy Spirit who now lives within you and will help guide your conduct.
- Truth provides protection for you (Phil. 4:8; Eph. 6:14; Isa. 28:15).
- Truth shields you from further lies. Many times one lie leads to another, but the truth guards you from evil and keeps you safe.
- Truth identifies you with the Father (John 14:6; Heb. 6:8). What if God could lie? What if all His promises were lies? You have had persons who made promises to you but broke their promises because they were weak human beings. God is like that. God cannot lie (Num. 23:19). The greatest promise God ever made was that He would send a Savior to pay the debt for man’s sins. What a promise! When I fulfill my promises, then I tell the truth regardless of the cost, I glorify God. I am a “truth-teller,” a “promise-keeper.”
- Truth creates a spirit of trust (Ps. 31:5, 6). Lies create a spirit of deceit and hypocrisy. But when you consistently tell the truth, it is easier to remain honest. On the other hand, it is hard to be friends with a hypocrite because you never know what he or she is saying behind your back.
- Truth exposes danger to be avoided (1 Tim. 2:4). Lies open you up to destruction. The more truthful you are, the more hardships you can avoid. Lying only leads to havoc and ruin. You may think you are getting away with a lie, but in reality, you are causing a lot of pain down the road.

- Truth sets a good pattern for your life. Lies set an evil pattern for your life. Jesus gave us a principle that applies here: the one who is faithful in small things will be faithful over great things (Matt. 25:23). If you are faithful in telling the truth about small issues, you are establishing a pattern that will enable you to tell the truth on the big issues, too.

- Truth lives (John 8:32). Lies enslave. Mark Twain was right when he said, “The difference between a person who tells the truth and one who tells a lie is that the lie-teller has got to have a better memory.” Lies trap you because you have to live in the false world you have created. You can’t allow anyone to see the true you. You have to keep pretending.

CONCLUSION

If you were to ask Jesus, “How do I look?” what would He say? What sign(s) would He hang around your neck: “Izar.” “Hypocrite,” “Cheat”? We all carry those signs to some extent. You’ve broken promises to your family and to your friends, you’ve lied to God. When you asked Jesus to be your Savior, you promised Him your life. Maybe some time has led to so many times that not only do you have trouble trusting others, you have trouble trusting Jesus. But if you have ever had circumstances that made it impossible to be honest, if you have ever been in a situation in which potentially you might have to lie, you’ve got to realize that the only person you can deceive is yourself. The only person you can’t deceive is God. He knows your heart, He knows your motives. God is not like that. God cannot lie. You can’t lie to Him. God is omniscient. He can read your heart. When a man said to the people of Israel, “The Lord is not God,” He was falsehood. God is true. You cannot lie to God. God is truthful. And if you consistently lie, you are a hypocrite. He is the true you. You have to keep pretending.

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

Truthfulness and integrity are attributes of God, and he who possesses these qualities possesses a power that is invincible.

Ellen White
My Life Today, p. 331
WHERE IS THE FLOCK GOD HAS GIVEN TO US?

Jeremiah 13:20

God will ask—

Are the shepherds faithfully caring for the flock as those who must give an account? Are the ministers of God watching for souls, realizing that those under their care are the purchase of the blood of Christ?

that we, as His chosen shepherds, be accountable for our flocks.

II. WHERE IS THE FLOCK?

A. The question did not need an answer. The Lord used the prophet Jeremias to urge the Israelite leaders to respond, because the “flock” was already being given to the enemy.

B. In our hands.

III. THE BEAUTIFUL FLOCK

A. “The work that lies next to our church members is to become interested in our youth; for they need kindness, patience, tenderness, line upon line, precept upon precept. Oh, where are the fathers and mothers in Israel? There ought to be a large number who would be stewards of the grace of Christ, who would feel not merely a casual but a special interest in the young!” (Ellen G. White, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 41).

B. God’s white robes.

CONCLUSION

The destruction of Judah was near when God asked the great question to his leaders: “Where is the flock I have given to you?”

We are living at the nightfall of this world, and God asks us the same question. “Where is the flock I have given to you?”

The sheep are worth much more than we can imagine. Their value is the price of Jesus’ blood: they are priceless. Jesus is the ideal model. If we have to lead children to identify themselves with Jesus, (which is the only real form of conversion), we have to lead them to admire and love Him. Christ needs to live in us. It is only then that we will be able to answer the question “Where is the flock I have given to you?” with the same words used by Jesus when He presents the redeemed to God: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me” (Heb. 2:13).

As we study the body and how it is made, we realize that the body was designed to be physically active. Thus, the number-one secret of true longevity is regular physical activity. Here are some interesting facts:

• People who walk half an hour daily cut their heart-at-tack risk in half compared to those who seldom exercise.

• People who are physically active are happier, better able to cope with stress, experience less depression, and sleep more soundly.

• A British study found that people who maintain aerobic fitness may delay biological aging by up to 12 years.

• The Adventist Health Study found that the best predictor of a long, healthy life is a person’s level of physical activity.

• If you walk half an hour daily, you will burn the equivalent of 15 pounds of fat in a year.

• Regular exercise may help to prevent some of our most common cancers, including breast, colon, prostate, and endometrial cancer.

• Exercise can help you reduce your risk for diabetes, stroke, and hip fractures, as well as lower your blood pressure and keep your weight controlled for life.

• Exercise is the ideal model. If we have to lead children to identify themselves with Jesus, (which is the only real form of conversion), we have to lead them to admire and love Him. Christ needs to live in us. It is only then that we will be able to answer the question “Where is the flock I have given to you?” with the same words used by Jesus when He presents the redeemed to God: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me” (Heb. 2:13).

Francisco Lemos is an editor at the Brazilian Publishing House.

Sermon Notes:

Taking my jacket off, I bent over the boy, blew into his nostrils, breathed into his mouth, during the whole time asking God to bring him back to life. I worked and prayed until sunset, and just at that moment I noticed a soft breathing. Thank God, my son had revived! That day, I learned the lesson of my life: never again (will I) look at another boy drowning without removing my jacket and doing all that is possible to save him” (Dr. Scott).

God’s wish is for us to experience long, productive lives to glorify His name and serve Him. Simply living long is not enough; quality of life is what counts. Many today live to be 80 or 90 years old, but their lives are not necessarily productive for God. I suggest to you that the longevity God wishes for us is exemplified in the life of Moses, who climbed Mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah at age 120. We are told that “His eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated” (Deut. 34:7, NASB). True longevity means living a long life while being physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fit. Christ underscores this in John 10:10: “I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.”

As we study the body and how it is made, we realize that the body was designed to be physically active. Thus, the number-one secret of true longevity is regular physical activity. Here are some interesting facts:

• People who walk half an hour daily cut their heart-at-tack risk in half compared to those who seldom exercise.

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• If you walk half an hour daily, you will burn the equivalent of 15 pounds of fat in a year.

• Regular exercise may help to prevent some of our most common cancers, including breast, colon, prostate, and endometrial cancer.

• Exercise can help you reduce your risk for diabetes, stroke, and hip fractures, as well as lower your blood pressure and keep your weight controlled for life.

• Perhaps, like many Adventist leaders, you already know all this. The question is, are you exercising every day? Research shows that knowledge alone does not necessarily translate into healthy behavior. Despite all the knowledge and counsel regarding exercise, my patients often say, “I don’t have time” or “There is too much to do. Exercise does not fit into my schedule.” Does that sound familiar? In this fast-paced world, with responsibilities for family, job, and church ministry, time is precious. However, what we don’t realize is that we have only one choice when it comes to exercise and our schedule. We must ask ourselves, what is best fits my schedule: walking 30 minutes a day or being dead 24 hours a day? It may seem an exaggeration, but it is true.

Recently I read that Steve Jobs, CEO for Apple computers, is taking a six-month leave of absence due to health issues. Jobs battled pancreatic cancer four years ago. Now he is again forced to take time from his busy schedule to regain his health. Some of us may have a tendency to put more value on our health after it is compromised. Perhaps caring for our health becomes a priority only when we are on the verge of losing it. It does not have to be that way. We can start today and, with God’s help, adopt healthier behaviors.

You may ask, “How do I start? What is the best exercise?” Research and inspiration tell us that walking is first on the list. In fact, we read that “a walk, even in winter, would be more beneficial to the health than all the medicine the doctors may prescribe.” The North American Division recently launched a new program, “InStep for Life,” to encourage church members to become physically active (www.InStepforLife.com). Wouldn’t it be wonderful if pastors and elders would motivate others by example and thus help the church experience God’s desire for each of us to have an abundant life? It is all about choice, and the choice is yours. Isn’t it time you included walking (or some other form of exercise) in your schedule? Start today and take one day at a time. If you do, God’s name will be honored, and the benefits will be yours for a long, productive life.

| ELDER’S DIGEST | JULY | SEPTEMBER 2009 |

| SERMON 4 |

Jeremiah 13:20

Jeremiah 13:20 contains an important question God asked His people in the past and which He might ask us in the near future: “Where is the flock God has given to you?”

This question was asked to the leaders of Judah, in a dramatic moment for the nation. The enemy, Babylon, was coming from the north (Jer. 6:22), and the final destruction was almost inevitable. The testimony of history is conclusive: in 605, 597, and 586 B.C., the Chaldeans subdued the Israelites in overwhelming defeats.

The same question is asked of us today: “Where is the flock God has given to you?”

I. RAISE YOUR EYES.

A. It is a warning. Even more than that, it sounds like an order from the Lord: “Lift up your eyes and see those who come from the north” (Jer. 13:20).

B. God always warns His people. The message originally sent to Judah applies to us as well: Open your eyes, He says, and look at the signs. The end is near.

C. The leaders of Judah were not concerned. Although the situation was critical, the leaders in Judah didn’t seem to have a notion of the danger. They did not advise the people and did not take care of the flock. What is our reaction today? Are we concerned about the world’s business and even the church’s business? Is our business that we don’t have time for its business? Are we so concerned about the world’s business that we don’t have time for its business?

In 605 B.C., the Chaldeans subdued the Israelites in overwhelming defeats.

II. WHERE IS THE FLOCK?

A. Where is the flock? God always warns His people that those under their care are accountable for their flocks.

B. That was the sad reality.

C. We are the leaders in Judah, and the leaders in Judah didn’t seem to have any notion of the danger. They did not advise the people and did not take care of the flock.

D. In our hands.

E. In our hands. The question is asked today of church leaders, pastors, and elders. God has entrusted precious lambs to our care, to instruct, to educate, to save.

F. Counseling account. God will ask—

that we, as His chosen shepherds, be accountable for our flocks.

G. Counseling account. God will ask—

that we, as His chosen shepherds, be accountable for our flocks.

H. There ought to be a large number who would be stewards of the grace of Christ, who would feel not merely a casual but a special interest in the young.” (Ellen G. White, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 41).

I. We are the leaders of Judah.

J. We are the leaders of Judah.

K. We are the leaders of Judah.

L. We are the leaders of Judah.

M. We are the leaders of Judah.

N. We are the leaders of Judah.

O. We are the leaders of Judah.

P. We are the leaders of Judah.

Q. We are the leaders of Judah.

R. We are the leaders of Judah.

S. We are the leaders of Judah.

T. We are the leaders of Judah.

U. We are the leaders of Judah.

V. We are the leaders of Judah.

W. We are the leaders of Judah.

X. We are the leaders of Judah.

Y. We are the leaders of Judah.

Z. We are the leaders of Judah.

| ARTICLE | by Katia Reinert |

HEALTHY TIPS FOR LEADERS

SEVEN SECRETS OF LONGEVITY


2www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/jan/15/steve-jobs-apple-nasdaq

3Ellen G. White, Counsels on Health, p. 57.

4Katia Reinert

5Family Nurse Practitioner at Washington Adventist Hospital in Maryland, USA

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Although Christians—Adventist churches—Community Outreach, although Christians—Adventist hospitals are to be more than merely healthcare delivery systems. They have a unique opportunity to bear a Christian witness and to exemplify the life and work of the Great Physician. Relationships should be friendly, kind, and expressive of the love of Christ, and to apply the principles of Sabbath observance as found in the Scriptures and taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adven-

tist hospitals are to be more than merely healthcare delivery systems. They have a unique opportunity to bear a Christian witness and to exemplify the life and work of the Great Physician. Relationships should be friendly, kind, and expressive of the love of Christ, and to apply the principles of Sabbath observance as found in the Scriptures and taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
And call the sabbath a delight; the holy day of the Lord honorable; and honor him, desiring it from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure, speaking your own word.

Isaiah 58:13

their Sabbathkeeping principles and request others to adopt such a schedule that will exempt them from Sabbath duties.

What schedule or other factors make this impossible, Adventists should clearly identify the duties, if any, they can conscientiously perform on the Sabbath and the frequencies for them.

3. Where the above accommodations cannot be arranged, members should make every effort to avoid leaving work behind that might entail travel or mount and abstain from routine work.

Seventh-day Adventist Educational Institutions: Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools and higher educational institutions have a major role in shaping the Sabbath observance habits of future generations of members of the church, and Seventh-day Adventist universities do much to mold the thinking of the church’s clergy and professional class. It is important, therefore, that both the theory and practice of how to maximize the joyful blessings of the Sabbath be as close as possible to the ideal in these institutions.

Applications of this principle should include:

1. Adequate preparation for the Sabbath.
2. Demonstration of the beginning and ending of the Sabbath hours.
3. Appropriate school-home activities: worships, prayer bands, witness, etc.
4. Keeping necessary duties to a minimum, preferably entrusting them to people who volunteer their service rather than to those who do the same work for pay during the week.
5. Insisting that members model what is expected to characterize such services in the churches of the school’s constituency.
6. Avoidance of non-Sabbath activities on Sabbath afternoon.
7. Structuring the weekly program so that the Sabbath will be a lingering joy and the climax of the week, rather than spoil the Sabbath privileges are sometimes curtailed or denied by military, educational, political, or other organizations. To prevent and alleviate these regrettable situations, the following suggestions should be considered:

SECULAR EMPLOYMENT AND TRADE AS RELATED TO THE SABBATH

Statement of Principle: The biblical view of the Sabbath includes both a divine and a human dimension (Matt. 12:7, 8). From the Sabbath, the believer learns the element of worship, to renew his commitment to God by desisting from the daily work in order to worship God more freely and more fully (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:15, 16; Isa. 58:13). From the human perspective, the Sabbath summons the believer to celebrate God’s creative and redemptive love by showing mercy and concern toward others (Deut. 5:12-15; Matt. 12:12; Luke 13:10-12; John 5:1-17). Thus the Sabbath encompasses both cessation from secular work for the purpose of honoring God and performing deeds of love and kindness toward fellow beings.

Essential and Emergency Work: In order to uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists are expected to make wise choices in matters of employment, guided by a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Experience has shown that there are hazards in choosing vocations that will not allow them to worship their Creator on the Sabbath day free from involvement in secular labor. This means that they will avoid types of employment that, although essential for the functions of a technologically advanced society, may offer problems in Sabbath observance.

The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy are explicit about our duties as Christians to our fellowmen, even in the Sabbath day. In the modern context, many employed in occupations involved with the saving of life and property are called upon to deal with emergencies. Arranging for regular work to avoid using the Sabbath hours for gainful emergency employment or accepting work only on weekends in emergency occupations to augment the family budget is out of harmony with Sabbathkeeping principles given by Christ. Thus, members of the church should be required to provide a Saturday night program.

Sabbath Observance in Education for Ministry: Ministry that is often acquired by continuous secular or routine activities. (See Christ’s comments on rescuing oxen or sheep from ditches and helping people in need: Matt. 12:11; Luke 13:16.) Absenting oneself from God’s house and being denied fellowship with the believers on the Sabbath can have a chilling effect on one’s spiritual life.

Many employers in so-called essential service areas will make accommodations for Sabbathkeepers. When such arrangements are made, the church members should carefully review biblical principles of Sabbathkeeping and in that light examine the type of activity, environment, requirements of the job, and personal motives before committing themselves to working on the Sabbath. They should ask of the Lord, as did Paul on the Damascus road, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” When this attitude of faith prevails, we are persuaded that the Lord will lead the believer to discern His will and supply strength and wisdom to follow it.

Moral Decisions Regarding Sabbath Observance. Sabbath-keeping members should be prepared for both denial or refusal of any occupation. Such support will serve to strengthen the experience of a genuine renewal of the Sabbath joys in the life of the church.

f. Sabbath Examinations: Seventh-day Adventists who face required examinations given on the Sabbath in non-Adventist schools or for certification by professional governing boards face special problems. In dealing with such situations, we recommend that they arrange for administration of the examinations on hours other than the Sabbath.

The church should encourage its members in careful Sabbath observance and, where possible, intercede with the appropriate authorities to provide opportunities for reverence for God’s day and access to the examinations.

g. Sabbath Travel: While Sabbath travel may be necessary for emergency employment, one has the duty to exercise on the Sabbath to become a secular function; therefore, preparation should be made in advance. Automobile fuel and other needs should be cared for before the Sabbath begins. Travel on commercial carriers for personal or business reasons should be avoided.

Treating a Specific Employment Problem. When a member of the church finds it necessary to resign from a position, or to lose his job because of Sabbath problems, and is reemployed by the denomination in similar work, and where the new job, because of its essential nature, requires the member to work on the Sabbath, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. A careful explanation of the essential nature of the work will be given to the member.
2. Whenever possible, the organization to ascertain that only the essential aspects of the new job will be performed on the Sabbath. Administrators should also explain to the new employee the religious purposes and basic objectives of the employing organization.
3. A rotation schedule will be adopted in order that the member who can conscientiously accept such work on the Sabbath may be able to enter into a fuller celebration of the Sabbath day.

Shift Work. When a Seventh-day Adventist works for an employer where shift work is required, the organization should work on the Sabbath or a portion thereof. Under such circumstances the member involved is encouraged to consider the following:

1. The believer should strive to be the best possible worker, a valuable employee whom the employer cannot afford to lose.
2. If a problem develops, the member should seek to resolve it by appealing to the employer personally for an accommodation based on goodwill and fairness.
3. The member should assist the employer by suggesting such an accommodation.

a. Working a flexible schedule
b. Taking a less desirable shift
c. Trading shifts with another employee; or

4. If the employer resists an accommodation, the member should immediately seek assistance from the pastor and from the Department in countries where they are involved in such activities.

PURCHASE OF GOODS AND SERVICES ON THE SABBATH

The Seventh-day Adventist is designed to provide spiritual freedom and joy for every person (Ex. 20:8-11). As Christians we must support this basic human right granted to each individual by the Creator. As a general rule, the purchasing of goods, eating out in restaurants, and paying for services to be provided by others ought to be avoided because they are out of harmony with the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping.

2. Furthermore, the above-mentioned commercial activities will turn the mind away from the sacredness of the Sabbath (see Neh. 10:31; 13:15f.). With proper planning, accommodations can be made in advance for foreseeable Sabbath needs.

Sabbath Travel. While Sabbath travel may be necessary for emergency employment, one has the duty to exercise on the Sabbath to become a secular function; therefore, preparation should be made in advance. Automobile fuel and other needs should be cared for before the Sabbath begins. Travel on commercial carriers for personal or business reasons should be avoided.
First of all, please note that there are no membership categories in our church. Every church has but one membership list. All church members are considered to be in regular standing unless they are under church discipline. If a member is disciplined, he or she can still retain membership, but risks the chance to continue to perform duties for the church. However, if a member is disfellowshipped from the church and returns and gets re-baptized, the person can again be elected for duties, if approved by the church board and members. So the answer is ‘yes’, but it is up to the church to make the final decision.

It is also vital to remember that when we look for qualifications in an elder, some key characteristics include: spiritual and moral credibility, capacity and knowledge, and availability and time. If an elder does not have these qualities, he or she might not be qualified to be an elder in the first place. Considering this point, a person who has returned to church through rebaptism may not be the best person to be elected as an elder if their past reputation, for some reason or another, affects their present state.

Paul’s intent in stating that a man must be the “husband of one wife” isn’t that a man must be married to become an elder, but if he is married, he must be faithful to his wife in a monogamous relationship. A person doesn’t need to be married to become an elder. If we insist that all elders be married, then to be consistent we would have to require them to have more than one child (“having his children in subjection with all gravity” 1 Tim. 3:4). Again, if we press Paul’s words beyond his original intent, we could argue not only that a potential elder must have at least two children but also that his children still live at home with him. The point is not that children must be living at home; however, if his children are living at home, he must manage them well, and they must be respectful and obedient.

A potential elder must honor, love, and be devoted to his wife and her alone. This view allows for the possibility of an elder being remarried after the death of his wife or after a divorce, although the phrase in question does not directly address that situation. The situation of a divorced man must be treated carefully, however. If he was the “innocent” party in the divorce and was not unfaithful, and he then gets remarried according to the Bible instructions, he would sometimes need to prove himself in his new marriage. In this case, such a person isn’t disqualified from becoming an elder again, but the final decision belongs to the church board and church members.
COMMUNICATION: MORE THAN WORDS

DO WE LOOK LIKE AMBASSADORS?

To present a good image, we must be sure that our exterior appearance is in harmony with our interior. Clean, well-ironed clothes, shined shoes, and neatly combed hair communicate for us even before we open our mouths. Our smiles and personal hygiene reveal how we take care of our bodies.

How do you think others will respond to your current image? Look in the mirror. What image do you present? What affect may this have when you are going to talk about Jesus? If you consider yourself an ambassador for the King of Kings, how will this affect your appearance?

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER . . .

As we think about how we communicate, we must also consider how our actions reveal our characters. Our non-verbal communication reflects who we are on the outside. In this context, the statement “you can’t serve God and money” (Matt 6:24). And Paul warns that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10, 17) and that “in the last days men will be lovers of money” (2 Tim 3:1, 2). Obviously, these passages underscore the peril of our times. But what does Ellen White write about money in the end time? Here is an overview:

NATIONAL RUIN?

In response to the economic crisis of the last four months of 2008 many have expressed the idea that “national ruin” is upon us. However, all of the relevant statements by Ellen White state that national ruin follows national apostasy—referring to the spiritual apostasy of enforcing Sunday observance.1

We are told that “those who hold the reins of government . . . are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis.” In this context he states that Sunday observance is encouraged to restore “divine favor and temporal prosperity.” So, even though there is a financial crisis now, according to Ellen White, things will get much worse after the normal Sunday law suggested by Revelation 13 comes into force.

It is interesting that many of those who point to the downturn in the economy as a sign of the end have counseled what people ought to do to “survive,” even though there is a financial crisis now, according to Ellen White, things will get much worse after the normal Sunday law suggested by Revelation 13 comes into force.

It is interesting to mention of many of those who point to the downturn in the economy as a sign of the end have counseled what people ought to do to “survive,” even though there is a financial crisis now, according to Ellen White, things will get much worse after the normal Sunday law suggested by Revelation 13 comes into force.

Our non-verbal communication reflects who we are on the outside. It’s no use dressing up nicely if our internal character defects reveal themselves in the way we behave. Our behavior must glorify our Father. As faithful messengers, we need a special garment, the robe of Christ’s righteousness. We need to dress ourselves with Christ and seek to develop a character like His. If His character qualities—gentleness, courage, meekness, strength, goodness, energy, perseverance, honesty, integrity, temperance, and vitality—become part of our characters, they will speak louder than our words.2

Ellen White makes clear that money will be a major factor in the end-time scenario and that Satan’s strategy is to lead people “to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven” (Matt 6:19). We need to ask God for wisdom to help us make good earning, saving, and spending decisions: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov 3:5, 6).

See Last Day Events, p. 134.
1 · Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 13.
2 · The Great Controversy, p. 590.
3 · Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 228.
4 · Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 472-73.
6 · Counsels on Stewardship, p. 40.
7 · Ibid., p. 60.
8 · G. Edward Reid is Director of the Stewardship Department of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.
9 · This article was written by G. Edward Reid and has been reprinted from Reflections, the Biblical Research Institute Newsletter, edited by Clinton Wahlen, Ph.D.
LEADERSHIP DURING THE DELAY

Leaders demonstrate their character more clearly in adversity than in prosperity. Contrast the vacillation of Aaron with the faithfulness of Moses during Israel’s delayed expectations.

When Moses failed to come back down the mountain right away, the people went to Aaron. “Look,” they said, “make us some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who brought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don’t know what has happened to him” (Exodus 32:1). Fed up with waiting, the people demanded immediate action. Moses was out of sight and they were out of faith. Unfortunately, when he should have stood strong, Aaron caved to their demands for visible, multiple gods and collected their offerings.

Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded and tooled it into the shape of a calf. The people exclaimed, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt (vs 4). Although he would later claim that a miraculous occurrence produced the golden calf, Scripture describes Aaron actively fashioning the idol and, subsequently, leading the congregation in false worship. When Aaron saw the calf they had made and the people dancing around it, he took the calf they had made and melted it in the fire. And when the metal had cooled, he ground it into powder and mixed it with water. Then he made the people drink it (vs. 19-20). Just as God had previously responded to Abraham’s entreaties for Sodom, He now extended mercy in response to Moses’ plea. Mercy did not avert judgment, however. Moses saw the calf and the dancing. In terrible anger, he threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and melted it in the fire. And when the metal had cooled, he ground it into powder and mixed it with water. Then he made the people drink it (vs. 19-20).

Notice their radically different leadership styles as Moses demands accountability from Aaron who tried to shift the blame for his own behavior to the people. “What did the people do to you?” he demanded. “How did they ever make you bring such terrible sin upon them?” (vs. 21). “Don’t get upset, sir,” Aaron replied. “You yourself know these people and what a wicked bunch they are. They said to me, ‘Make us some gods to lead us, for something has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt.’ So I told them, ‘Bring me your gold earrings. When they brought them to me, I threw them into the fire and out came this calf!’” (vs. 22-24). Imagine! Aaron’s apostasy is so bound up with the rebellion that he declares his own efforts (the basis of every false religion is salvation by works) to be a miraculous consequence.

Aaron’s leadership failure coupled with the nation’s rebellion demanded a call for repentance and reformation, especially in light of the scandal their behavior had brought upon God’s name and reputation in full view of nonbelieving enemies.

So Moses confronted the issue directly. When Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely out of control and much to the amusement of their enemies, he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, “All of you who are on the Lord’s side, come over here and join me.” And all the Levites came (vs. 25-26). Today, when our Lord’s return appears delayed, God still seeks leaders who will discern the truth, stand for right, and call for radical faithfulness to God’s plan. How will you and I lead?

James A. Cress
General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary

All of you who are on the Lord’s side, come over here and join me.

FROM PASTOR TO ELDERS by James A. Cress
Kincaid

Chance is about 11 or 12 years old. As the narrator in a 1990 novel, he has three older brothers and two younger twin sisters. His mother is a devout Seventh-day Adventist. Though his father is unchurched, he supports his wife’s staunch insistence that Kincaid and all their other children attend church faithfully every Sabbath morning. Kincaid is somewhat less impressed.

Throughout the book, the author, drawing unmistakable on autobiographical experiences, describes various scenarios in the Adventist subculture: potlucks, Pathfinders, worship services, and Sabbath School. In fact, Sabbath School is a scene that recurs quite regularly throughout the book. And Kincaid always wishes he were elsewhere.

"Any questions?" asks Brother Beal (Kincaid’s embattled Sabbath School teacher), looking even more churchy and bleached-out than usual. And my heart goes out to him, because it’s so clear that there can never be questions, because his words ask no questions. ... "Any comments then?" he asks. And I want to shout: Yes! ... "But I say nothing."

What was Sabbath School like for you as a child? This is a question whose answer should be considered seriously even if our responsibility is only for adult Sabbath School. It is important because the answers focus on some principles that pertain to Sabbath School for children, youth, and adults.

It is a reminder that those who attend our Sabbath School classes are not all the same. First, in any given adult Sabbath School class, the members are different developmentally. Some may be brand-new converts to Christianity; others may be lifelong, mature Christians. Second, members are also different educationally. Some may have advanced degrees; others may never have completed elementary school.

At the most basic level, the members of any given Sabbath School class have varying degrees of biblical literacy. A teacher may never have completed elementary school. Sabbath School classes are not all the same. First, in any given adult Sabbath School class, the members are different developmentally. Some may be brand-new converts to Christianity; others may be lifelong, mature Christians. Second, members are also different educationally. Some may have advanced degrees; others may never have completed elementary school.

Some may have completed elementary school. And Kincaid always wishes he were elsewhere.

Eliezer’s Digest

"churches . . . started focusing on loving Jesus rather than has resulted from a time in the nineteenth century when most of society has little knowledge of the most basic aspects of biblical knowledge. The author suggests that this has resulted from a time in the nineteenth century when churches . . . started focusing on loving Jesus rather than on listening to him."

Certainly biblical literacy is essential. If Christians do not know what information is contained in their Bibles, there is a problem. But knowledge is something more than just mere facts, more than just an awareness that Jesus loves us. In Scripture knowledge is relational and transformational.

Ellen G. White writes, “As long as individuals are content with a theory of truth and are yet lacking in the daily operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart, which is manifested in outward transformation of character, they are cutting themselves off from the qualification that would fit them for greater efficiency in the Master’s work.”

In Jesus’ time, it was the experts in religion, those who knew Scripture best, who rejected Him. More information is not enough. “Even the demons believe” (James 2:19, NKJV).

“If we ever know the truth, it will be because we prac- tice it. We must have a living experience in the things of God before we are able to understand His Word. This experimen- tal knowledge is what strengthens the intellect and builds us up into Christ our living Head.”

The expression “experimental knowledge” appears about 300 times in the Spirit of Prophecy. Careful reading of the context in each use of this term indicates that it refers to knowledge that is lived in one’s life. It means a knowledge that transforms behavior, not just knowledge of mere facts.

The psalmist writes, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart” (Ps. 26:2, NKJV).

Sabbath School should be a place where we try our minds and our hearts. It should be an intentional effort to try the minds and the hearts of our Sabbath School members. It seeks to be more than mere information; its goal is transformation.

One of the most common criticisms lev- elled at the Christian church is that it’s “too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good.” Dispelling this myth—showing the profound role faith can play in everyday life—is one of the central aims of a new television program that began airing on the Hope Channel earlier this year.

Intersection: Your Faith, Your World is a half-hour weekly program that explores issues as current as today’s headlines, but from the unique perspective of Seventh-day Adventist faith and values. The con- cept for Intersection came from world church presi- dent, Pastor Jan Paulsen, who wanted a program that focused on the real-life impact of faith, and which reminded people that religion is not something that should be locked away behind church doors.

“My hope is that this program will allow us say more clearly: ‘Look, the values we hold to—the values of God’s kingdom—are alive!’” says Pastor Paulsen. “‘They are not just dusty theological statements, the principles of Scripture find their best expression in everyday life, in the mundane and the routine.’

“Look around you and see what concerns your neighbor: things such as family, community, relationships, personal growth, finances, worries about the future. Does our faith have something significant to say about all these things? Of course. And this is the intersection—between faith and life—that this pro- gram explores.”

This theme of a faith that speaks to current is- sues in society is one that Pastor Paulsen has often highlighted. “I want the world to know,” he said in a Christmas message broadcast in December last year, “that our faith has something profound to say about issues in today’s headlines: the environment; public health; freedom; religious tolerance. I want the world to know we will do more than simply talk about the Scriptures; we will live its principles. And because of this we will inevitably be drawn into positive, con- structive engagement with our communities."

This is the message that Intersection aims to de- liver, through stories, interviews and panel discussions with lay people, administrators and experts. Bettina Krause, senior producer and host of the program, says that the discussions are lively and often surpris- ing. “We’re hearing from viewers that these programs make a great starting point for discussions at home, or for small groups, Sabbath School classes or youth groups,” she says.

Recent episodes have focused on topics as diverse as “Standing for what is Right,” “The Problem with Guilt” and “Secrets of a Happy Marriage.” Rajmund Dabrowski, communication director for the world church and executive producer of the program, says the goal is to help people step away from preconceived ideas and to look at an issue from someone else’s point of view. “For instance, in one program—‘Understanding other Religions’—we interviewed the communication director from an Islamic organization here in Washington, D.C.,” he says. “Her personal perspective on the impact of religious discrimination was truly eye-opening.”

You can find out more information about Intersection and download programs at http://intersection.adventist.org. Broadcast times and information is available at www.hopechannel.org.
INTERSECTION
Your Faith, Your World

Where faith, ideas and life come together

www.intersection.adventist.org

Intersection is a half-hour, weekly television program broadcast internationally by the Hope Channel. Find local listings at www.hopechannel.tv

A production of the Office of the President and the Communication Department of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church.